

Testimony of State Representative Steve Wieckert

Assembly Bill 545 – Physical Therapists Examining Board *Assembly Committee on Health and Healthcare Reform* *Room 417 North – November 20, 2007*

Good morning Chairwoman Leah Vukmir and committee members. I am pleased to come before you today to discuss Assembly Bill 545, the Physical Therapists Examining Board.

Currently 4,965 physical therapists are licensed to practice in Wisconsin. This field has seen significant growth over the past number of years and is a big reason why Wisconsin residents receive exemplary health care. As it stands, physical therapists are credentialed under the Physical Therapists Affiliated Credentialing Board which is attached to the Medical Examining Board.

AB 545, which I am in support of here today, will remove the Physical Therapists Affiliated Credentialing Board from underneath the Medical Examining Board and create the "Physical Therapy Examining Board", which independent with duties and responsibilities it had under the Medical Examining Board, only it will now report directly to the Wisconsin Department of Regulation & Licensing.

It is important to note, there is no taxpayer cost associated with this proposal as operating costs of the board are paid through the licensing fees assessed to the physical therapists.

When the Physical Therapists Affiliated Credentialing Board was created over 20 years ago, it was appropriate for them due to their size, and a required doctor's referral, to be under the Medical Examining Board. However as the profession and grown and evolved, physical therapists currently have direct access to treat patients without a doctor's referral in all cases except Medicaid/Medicare patients.

By creating the Physical Therapy Examining Board, we are merely updating the regulation & licensing of physical therapists in order to reflect the current reality of their profession. It is important to note, while currently under the Medical Examining Board, the Physical Therapists Affiliated Credentialing Board meets only 3 times a year. Under the new proposal, the Physical Therapy Examining

Board will meet 6 times a year. This is important as it will allow the board to keep up with the ever increasing number of physical therapists and assistants and guarantee proper regulation and discipline while maintaining their high standard of quality care.

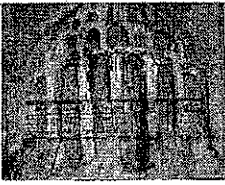
The creation of the Physical Therapists Examining Board does not give any new or remove any rule-making authority currently held by the Physical Therapists Affiliated Credentialing Board. With this change, the Physical Therapists Examining Board will have more autonomy in making decisions relevant to Wisconsin's physical therapists. The only change that would occur is that instead of requiring the Medical Examining Board to comment on and rules proposed by the Physical Therapists Affiliated Credentialing Board it would have the option to do so. The Medical Examining Board as with all boards within the Department of Regulation and Licensing will still hold the right to express any concerns or proposed rules.

Finally to summarize, the reasons to support AB 545 are:

1. Greater autonomy for the board in making decisions
2. Increased availability of the board to convene
3. No taxpayer cost associated with the move
4. Increased accountability and oversight
5. Duties and responsibilities of the Board remain unchanged
6. The Medical Examining Board and other boards will still be allow to comment on proposed rules

Currently, the Medical Examining Board, Wisconsin Medical Society, Chiropractic Examining Board and the Wisconsin Chiropractic Association have no objection to this legislation and the Wisconsin Physical Therapy Association enthusiastically supports this legislation and I applaud them for seeking this high level of accountability for the services they provide Wisconsin citizens.

Thank you. At this time I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.



Tenuta & Johns

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To: Assembly Committee on Health & Healthcare Reform
From: Jason Johns, on behalf of the Wisconsin Physical Therapy Association
Re: AB 545
Date: November 7, 2007

Members of the Committee;

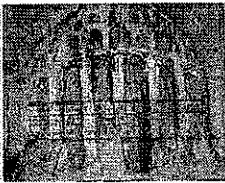
I am writing to you regarding AB 545, establishment of a Physical Therapy Examining Board within the Department of Regulation & Licensing. The Wisconsin Physical Therapy Association requests your support of this legislation to assure the continued efficient regulation of all physical therapists and physical therapy assistants in the state.

Regulation and oversight of physical therapy in Wisconsin is currently achieved via an affiliated credentialing board that is attached to the Medical Examining Board. According to Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 15.01 (1g): "*Affiliated credentialing board* means a part time body that is attached to an examining board to regulate a profession that does *not practice independently* of the profession regulated by the board....

It was appropriate 20 years ago to have the Physical Therapy Board be affiliated with the Medical Examining Board as physical therapists did not treat patients without the referral of a physician and were in essence under their supervision. The last 20 years however has seen a transition in the physical therapy profession. Physical therapists in Wisconsin now have direct access to see patients without a referral from a physician. Though peer collaboration between physical therapists and physicians still commonly occurs, physical therapists practice fully independent of any required physician supervision. Thus, the profession's affiliated credentialing board does not meet the statutory definition that created it. Physical therapy should be regulated by an examining board in order to reflect the current status of its profession and to bring it current with statutory definitions. Under Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 15.01 (7), an *examining board* is defined as "...a part time body which sets standards of professional competence and conduct for the profession under its supervision, conducts and grades the examinations of prospective new practitioners, grants licenses, investigates complaints of alleged unprofessional conduct and performs other functions assigned to it by law." The current affiliated board performs these functions but does so under an outdated statute, and the purpose of AB 545 is to have their duties properly reflected through statute by transitioning them to an examining board.

It is important to also note that by transitioning the current affiliated board to an examining board will allow them to meet 6 times a year instead of 3 times as is current practice of examining boards versus affiliated boards. By meeting more often, this will allow the board the opportunity to keep up with the ever increasing amount of physical therapists and their assistants and to assure proper regulation and discipline, thus increasing the safety and welfare of patients in Wisconsin. Twenty Eight (28) other states have recognized the need and recognition of independent boards and have them in place.

This legislation does not increase the powers of the physical therapy board but rather grants them the autonomy and recognition that their profession all ready has in everyday practice. This bill cleans up current statutes and does so in an efficient manner that ensures even more regulation and oversight of the profession. The true benefactors of this legislation are the people of Wisconsin and we hope you will support AB 545.



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FACTS ON AB 545

- The Medical Examining Board, Wisconsin Medical Society, Chiropractic Examining Board, and Wisconsin Chiropractic Association have all reviewed the bill and are not opposed to its passage.
- The Physical Therapists Affiliated Credentialing Board unanimously supports the bill, and the Wisconsin Occupational Therapy Association has officially registered its support of the bill.
- Only one group has expressed opposition to AB 545: The Wisconsin Athletic Trainer's Association. Coincidentally, the WATA is currently drafting legislation that would greatly expand their scope of practice and are looking for support from the Wisconsin Physical Therapy Association for their legislation.
- The Wisconsin Athletic Trainers requested a "quid pro quo" from the Wisconsin Physical Therapy Association. This request was very simple: "Support or upcoming scope of practice legislation and we will consider not opposing AB 545."
- The WPTA denied this request on the grounds that it feels that the groups most affected by AB 545 (MEB and Medical Society) have expressed no problem with the legislation. Further, the Wisconsin Athletic Trainer's Association is willing to oppose, and just as easily remove opposition to AB 545, based on what position we would take on a yet to be introduced scope of practice bill. It is the WPTA's feeling that AB 545 and the yet to be introduced AT legislation are two different animals that should be decided on their own individual merits. Comparing the two pieces of legislation and using them as leverage against each other is like comparing apples and oranges and agreeing to give someone the keys to your house if they agree not to steal your car.
- Administrative rule-making authority and scope of practice creation of a Physical Therapy Examining Board created by AB 545 would not be expanded or changed as compared to the current powers of the Physical Therapists Affiliated Credentialing Board. The only change that would occur is that instead of the MEB being required to comment on any administrative rules promulgated by a Physical Therapy Examining board, it would have the option of doing so. The MEB, and all boards within DRL, will still have right to express any concerns about rules promulgated by a Physical Therapy Examining Board as created by AB 545. (***)Please see attached Legislative Council Memo from Richard Sweet dated October 16, 2007 supporting this).
- Only changes is that the Physical Therapy Examining Board will have option to meet more often than an affiliated board, and can determine greater licensure fees to help support this further regulation. (No impact on the state fiscal as these licensure fees are paid by physical therapists and physical therapy assistants). It should be the goal of every legislator to work to see that the boards charged with enforcing and regulating the statutes and rules set forth by the legislature have the tools and autonomy to do so in a manner that best protects the people of Wisconsin and the profession it regulates). AB 545 would help ensure this.

WPTA requests that you review AB 545 and determine your vote based on the FACTS and to recognize that AB 545 is a completely separate issue than future athletic trainer scope of practice legislation. AB 545 is a regulatory board bill that only affects the physical therapy profession, the Medical Examining Board, and the members of the Wisconsin Medical Society. As the major players are ok with the bill based its merits, there is no reason to muddy the waters with a turf battle that should be fought on its own merits at a later date. After all, the FACTS speak loudly all by themselves.

Thank you,

Jason E Johns

On Behalf of The Wisconsin Physical Therapy Association



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Terry C. Anderson, Director
Laura D. Rose, Deputy Director

TO: REPRESENTATIVE STEVE WIECKERT
FROM: Richard Sweet, Senior Staff Attorney
RE: Powers of Examining Boards and Affiliated Credentialing Boards
DATE: October 16, 2007

This memorandum describes the powers of examining boards and affiliated credentialing boards.

General powers of examining boards are set forth in s. 15.08 (5), Stats., which states as follows:

15.08 (5) General powers. Each examining board:

- (a) May compel the attendance of witnesses, administer oaths, take testimony and receive proof concerning all matters within its jurisdiction.
- (b) Shall promulgate rules for its own guidance and for the guidance of the trade or profession to which it pertains, and define and enforce professional conduct and unethical practices not inconsistent with the law relating to the particular trade or profession.
- (c) May limit, suspend or revoke, or reprimand the holder of, any license, permit or certificate granted by the examining board.

The general powers of affiliated credentialing boards are set forth in s. 15.085 (5), Stats. The general powers of affiliated credentialing boards are identical to those of examining boards as shown above, with one exception. When promulgating a rule, other than an emergency rule, an affiliated credentialing board must do all of the following: (1) submit the proposed rule to the examining board to which it is attached, at least 60 days prior to submission of the proposed rule to the Legislative Council Rules Clearinghouse; (2) consider any comments on the proposed rule made by the examining board, if the examining board submits comments to the affiliated credentialing board within specified time limits; and (3) include in the report submitted to the Legislature prior to final promulgation any comments on the proposed rule submitted by the examining board and the affiliated credentialing board's responses to those comments. Other than this difference, the general powers of affiliated credentialing boards are identical to those of examining boards.

Feel free to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

RNS:jb;wu

Wisconsin Physical Therapy Association
A CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION
4781 Hayes Road, Suite 201 • Madison, WI 53704
Telephone 608/221-9191 • Fax 608/221-9697 • wpta@wpta.org

Dear Representative Wieckert;

The Wisconsin Physical Therapy Association wishes to express its support for establishment of a physical therapy examining board within the Department of Regulation & Licensing. The physical therapy profession has evolved into a stand alone profession since it was first placed under the affiliation of the medical examining board. Physical therapists in the state now have direct access to treat non-Medicaid & Medicare patients without a doctor's referral, and our profession is transitioning into a doctorate level degree. Keeping in line with the transition and development of the profession we feel it is time to transition our regulation & licensing board into an independent body.

You have our full support in introducing legislation that would update the current physical therapy affiliated board into a physical therapy examining board. We appreciate your recognition that this legislation is necessary and your desire to author this legislation.

Thank you,

Rob Worth
President
Wisconsin Physical Therapy Association





WISCONSIN ATHLETIC TRAINERS' ASSOCIATION

To: Assembly Committee on Health and Health Care Reform

Fr: Joe Greene, President, Wisconsin Athletic Trainers Association

Date: November 20, 2007

Re: Opposition to AB 545

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Joe Greene and I am the Supervisor of Athletic Training Services for the University of Wisconsin Hospital. I am also a Licensed Athletic Trainer and President of the Wisconsin Athletic Trainers Association (WATA). I represent our organization today in opposition to AB 545. Our organization currently represents 1086 athletic trainers and athletic training students in the State of Wisconsin.

In order to understand why we are opposed to this bill, I first want to make sure you understand what an athletic trainer is and what we are not. We are not personal trainers. We are versatile medical providers that are trained to perform a broad spectrum of medical services that are in need by the active population in the State of Wisconsin. Some athletic trainers specialize in the provision of rehabilitation services. Our scope of practice certainly overlaps with that of physical therapists in this area. An athletic trainer also is an allied healthcare provider recognized by the American Medical Association in 1990, and athletic trainers have been licensed in the State of Wisconsin since 1999. Importantly, over 40% of athletic trainers now work within hospitals and clinics.

Licensed athletic trainers work in three typical environments in the State of Wisconsin:

- 1) The Professional and Collegiate Setting
- 2) The Hospital and Clinic Setting
 - Responsibilities : Rehabilitation, Orthopedic Clinic, Outreach
- 3) The Industrial Setting
 - Large employers including Quad Graphics, Alliance Laundry, and Land's End

The healthcare system is spared millions of dollars annually due to services provided by the athletic trainer as they manage musculoskeletal injuries in-house for their employees and athletes, whether in industry or in an athletic department.

We believe there is NO compelling reason for passage of AB 545. The bill removes the Physical Therapist Affiliated Credentialing Board from the oversight of the Medical Examining Board. Why is such a move being considered? What will change if this bill is not passed? If it is good for the physical therapists, then why not amend the bill to provide independent examining boards for the dietitians, podiatrists, athletic trainers, and occupational therapists?

To date only four groups have registered on AB 545. The Wisconsin Occupational Therapy Association has registered in favor of the bill. Aurora Health Care, Inc. and the Wisconsin Medical Society have registered neutral on the bill and the WATA is registered in opposition to the bill.

The Wisconsin Physical Therapists Association has stated the need for this bill is driven by two primary factors: 1) That they possess direct access to see patients without a physician referral; and 2) Board meetings would increase from three to six times a year in order to ensure proper regulation and discipline. With respect to the first point, despite direct access capability, the overwhelming percentage of patients who see physical therapists are referred by a physician. Additionally, it is a misleading assertion to say that physical therapists already practice predominantly in a direct access capacity and they simply want their practice act to reflect that. This does not accurately reflect the current caseload of PTs who overwhelmingly see patients under physician referral. Direct access is simply in its pilot stage at the present time. With respect to the second point, the Physical Therapist Affiliated Credentialing Board, just like any affiliated board, can currently meet as many times as necessary to address their caseload. They need not be an examining board to meet more frequently. Important to mention is that this caseload involved a grand total of 15 potential disciplinary cases in 2006. Hardly a large amount.

The Wisconsin Athletic Trainers Association is opposed to AB 545 because it shifts all the rule-making power to a board comprised solely of physical therapists, thus eliminating any physician oversight. It simply makes it much easier for the Board to make rules and policy that govern their profession. This may or may not include future rules which determine what services physical therapists can provide without referral. We also dispute the WPTA position that this bill cannot affect athletic trainers. The interpretation of rules and policy at the federal level and state level continue to affect our employment in the rehabilitation and orthopedic clinic setting. Two obvious primary cases come to mind. These include the physical therapy practice act changes and their interpretation in 2004 and federal CMS regulation. Unless you want to see the other affiliated professions seeking their own boards, I would encourage you not to support this proposal. If passed, we will be forced to pursue an independent board as well. The potential of the passage of this bill has already forced us to prepare new legislation which modifies our practice act.

We believe the unspoken reason the WPTA is pursuing this legislation is the pursuit of their Vision 2020 which defines the physical therapist as an autonomous provider across the spectrum of rehabilitation services. This includes the provision of current services, but also includes the provision of many new services which are currently reserved only

for physicians. This would certainly have an impact on cost and charges. Competition in the rehabilitation world has not been appreciated by physical therapists in the past. We have been lobbied against at both the federal and state level for the past 15 years as our profession has grown. The WATA respects the WPTA position on the growth of their profession. Athletic trainers simply want to be a present and future choice of physicians and patients for the provision of rehabilitation services under referral and within our scope of practice.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. The WATA sincerely appreciates your time, attention, and consideration of our concerns.

Jim Doyle
Governor

**WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
REGULATION & LICENSING**



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**PHYSICAL THERAPISTS AFFILIATED CREDENTIALING BOARD
2006 ANNUAL REVIEW**

Board Activity

- The Board discussed several questions relating to its continuing education rule and posted questions and answers on its web page;
- The Board began drafting a revision of its continuing education rule;
- The Board reviewed proposed legislation relating to electromyography and an independent Physical Therapists Affiliated Credentialing Board.

Licensing Activity

	<u>PT</u>	<u>PTA</u>
Applications Received	452	234
Licenses Issued	226	84
Renewals (2005 renewal)	4576	1215

Enforcement Activity

New complaints received in 2006	14
Number of Respondents in those 14 cases	15
Number of those 14 new cases opened	7
Total cases closed in 2006	15
Total closed at screening in 2006	10
Total closed after investigation in 2006	3
Total closed with formal action in 2006	2
Cases pending as of 2/19/07	10



WISCONSIN ATHLETIC TRAINERS' ASSOCIATION

To: Assembly Committee on Health and Health Care Reform

Fr: Mike Van Veghel, Licensed Athletic Trainer, Wisconsin Athletic Trainers
Association, Legislative Committee Chair

Date: November 20, 2007

Re: Opposition to AB 545

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to voice my concerns regarding AB 545. I am asking that you please do not support AB545. As you know, AB 545 will establish an Independent Examining Board for the Physical Therapy profession in Wisconsin. This will eliminate the oversight the Medical Examining Board currently has with licensed physical therapists (and other allied health professionals) by creating an *independent* examining board comprised of physical therapists. As an athletic trainer, I have some concerns about the implications this bill will have on my profession.

Like many Licensed Athletic Trainers (LATs) in Wisconsin, I work in a clinical rehabilitation setting. My role is to independently evaluate and treat patients referred by their physician for rehabilitation services. My patient population is quite diverse and on any given day may range from little league baseball players to senior citizens recovering from knee replacement surgery. I work closely with physical therapists and occupational therapists to provide a diverse array of patient care. Each of us brings special skill sets and talents to the rehabilitation setting and I am fortunate to be part of our comprehensive patient care services.

Like occupational and physical therapists, I, as an allied health care professional am regulated by an affiliated credentialing board overseen by the Medical Examining Board. If this current arrangement remains as is, frankly nothing will change in the delivery of quality, accessible and affordable health care. However, with the passage of AB 545, there are potential implications that could negatively affect those desirable aspects of physical medicine and rehabilitation services available to the patient population in Wisconsin.

My concerns with AB 545 center on professional protection, patient access and health care costs.

AB 545 will allow physical therapists to promulgate rules that could directly affect my ability to provide rehabilitation services to patients. There is precedent for a similar action regarding the regulation and supervision of physical therapy assistants that was enacted in 2004. The net result was a loss of employment for many clinic based LATs, many of whom were replaced by PT assistants (In other words, a highly skilled individual with a bachelors degree by an individual with an associates degree).

Likewise, on the federal level, the Center for Medicare Services has limited the scope of the athletic training profession by failing to recognize certified athletic trainers as providers of rehabilitation services.

The net effect of this CMS position is a restriction of access to rehabilitation services by the public through two key mechanisms:

- 1). Inability of athletic trainers to receive reimbursement by CMS for rehabilitation services
- 2). A "trickle effect" of other third party payers who follow Medicare in determining their reimbursement policies.

I have witnessed this first hand, several times. In certain instances I am not allowed to treat young athletes simply because their insurance carrier mimics CMS in their reimbursement policies. I have had to discontinue other services to patients simply because they reached Medicare eligibility age. That is, "today I can rehabilitate your knee, tomorrow, since you turn 65, I can not". Both circumstances have resulted in a delay in treatment and restriction of access to rehabilitation services. Quite simply, more patients are being steered into an environment that is already backlogged and wrought with lengthy wait times. Likewise, many clinics have simply found it easier to preferentially hire or replace athletic trainers with physical therapists or PT assistants.

While the second example may seem irrelevant to a State-based initiative, the practical applications of the two situations are very similar. CMS has the ability to enact its own rules, policies and procedures and it is no secret that the individual overseeing CMS rehabilitation services policy is a physical therapist. While there is legislative oversight, rarely does Congress fail to enact these rules unless there is significant opposition to them. A similar process is in place here which could plausibly have a similar result. The ability of an independent PT board to promulgate rules affecting the ability of athletic trainers to provide rehabilitation services (as our state licensure allows) is a very real concern shared by myself and many LATs statewide.

While the athletic training profession has evolved dramatically in the past 10-20 years, we have yet to find many of our colleagues in positions that manage or have the authority to hire clinical rehabilitation staff. I am strongly concerned about the ability of an independent PT board to promulgate future rules that could directly or indirectly limit the

scope of practice, restrict our patient base, or create situations that would bias hiring practices against those who hold the athletic training credential. Whether these concerns of restriction on our ability to perform and receive reimbursement of rehabilitation services are real or perceived to be real is immaterial. Perception on the part of managers and those in hiring capacities will determine who gets hired and who is "phased out" of the rehab environment.

Rudimentary economics reveal that as access to services becomes restricted and referrals for those services continue to increase (i.e. baby boomer generation) the costs of those services will most likely rise. As physical therapists continue their march toward independent practice the costs of their services will correspondingly increase. Increased licensure fees, education costs, professional liability insurance etc will undoubtedly be passed on to consumers. Enacting legislation that could facilitate this escalation of costs is fiscally unwise and seems to flow against the current trend of health care cost containment.

I am aware of the arguments brought forth by the Wisconsin Physical Therapy Association in support of AB 545 and the creation of an independent examining board. I also respect their efforts at professional growth. However, I would be doing myself, my colleagues and our future athletic trainers a disservice if the potential implications of this agenda were not examined through a wide angled lens. The argument brought forth by the WPTA and their representation that "Nothing will change" fails to take into account past precedent as well as potential future implications, be them intended or unintended.

I am a proud member of the Wisconsin Athletic Trainers Association, which has met with the Wisconsin Physical Therapy Association and will continue to meet with them in the hopes of reaching a consensus on their legislation. However, prudence will likely require our organization to propose and pursue legislation similar to AB 545 to ensure our viability as an active and engaged provider of clinical rehabilitation services. Simple extrapolation would imply that other allied health professions would soon follow. A simpler and more effective approach seems to be to leave what works, and works well alone.

With the above in mind, I respectfully would ask you to oppose AB545 at this time.

To: Assembly Committee on Health and Health Care Reform

Fr: Mark Gibson, Licensed Athletic Trainer and Licensed Physical Therapist,
Board of Directors, National Athletic Trainers Association

Date: November 20, 2007

Re: Opposition to AB 545

Representatives of the Assembly Committee on Health and Healthcare Reform, my name is Mark Gibson. I am a Licensed Athletic Trainer and Licensed Physical Therapist from La Crosse, WI. I am the Athletic Training Education Program Director at the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse and an on-call Physical Therapist at Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center in La Crosse. I also sit on the Board of Directors of the National Athletic Trainers' Association and represent to that Board, over 6,000 Athletic Trainers from Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin. I am here today to ask you to not support AB545, which will eliminate the oversight the Medical Examining Board currently has with licensed physical therapists by creating an independent examining board comprised of physical therapists. As an athletic trainer/physical therapist, I have some concerns about the implications this bill will have on my professions.

My primary concern is that the impetus for this bill appears to be a national physical therapy initiative called Vision 2020 to create independent practices for physical therapists. This initiative is complete with the steps necessary to succeed in this endeavor. Previous successful steps toward this goal have included "direct access" for patients to physical therapists in Wisconsin. In practice however, the insurance industry has continued to require Plans of Care approved by physicians for physical therapists to carry out rehabilitation programs for patients. When speaking with my physical therapy colleagues they indicate a desire to work closely with physicians in providing health care to their mutual patients. They wonder if the profession of physical therapy really is ready for autonomous practice. By establishing an Independent Examining Board, physical therapists will establish a more independent practice rather than a closer working relationship with other health care providers.

Physical Therapists have begun to expand their educational programming into the realms of pharmacology, radiology and other traditionally medical sciences. In a relatively short period of time, they have moved their educational entry level degree from a Bachelor's Degree to a Master's Degree and now to a Doctor of Physical Therapy Degree. This rapid succession of entry level degree requirements has left the profession of physical therapy with an inflated entry level degree that most practicing physical therapists today do not have nor will they attain. Employers seek only licensed practitioners with little to no regard for the actual degree of the individual.

In my opinion an independent examining board will eventually lead to increased physical therapy health care costs. Health care costs continue to increase and independent practitioners (in an environment where there is already greater demand than supply) will only serve to increase these costs. As a health care provider I feel deeply that we should be working together as a team rather than establishing independent practices. In a team atmosphere, where practitioners rely on each others specialties, and are led by a team leader can drastically reduce costs. Independent practitioners, with increased overhead costs only serve to drive up health care costs.

I also believe that this bill will hinder access to licensed athletic trainers in Wisconsin. When left to develop their own scope of practice, physical therapists have already proven that they expand that scope by limiting the scope of others or by legislating their position in the health care arena, rather than following a natural evolution of their practice. They have recently added to their practice act the domains of prevention and wellness and on-field athletic injury care. Physical Therapists practicing in Wisconsin rarely believe that they are experts in these areas as physical therapists. There is almost a disconnect between practicing physical therapists and their State and National Associations. Independent boards writing independent rules and regulations have the propensity to expand scope of practice for licensed individuals. This practice of expanding scope of practice without additional education and through legislative activity, simply leaves practicing physical therapists with a "I don't know what they are doing" attitude.

As an athletic trainer and a physical therapist, my hope is that the WPTA will continue to meet with the WATA to reach a consensus on their legislation. Until that time, I would ask you to oppose AB545.

I am hopeful that as health care providers, athletic trainers and physical therapists will continue to have conversations in order to build compromise before legislation moves forward. An emphasis on teamwork will enhance health care for the people of Wisconsin.